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ABSTRACT

This background paper examines the relationship between child abuse and the workplace and discusses employer-based strategies that can reduce the stress levels of working parents and provide a buffer against problems of child abuse and neglect. Part 1, "Child Abuse and the World of Work," discusses the kinds of stress experienced by working parents, work as a deterrent to child abuse, neglect and latchkey children, and job stress and family violence. Also discussed are heavy work demands and absent fathers, and childbirth and the working parent. Part 2, "Preventive Strategies in the Workplace," briefly describes workplace-related interventions such as employer-supported day care, flexible worktime options, and employee assistance programs. Educational programs and support networks for parents are also described. Concluding remarks assert that workplace supports for employed parents are both feasible and necessary. (RH)

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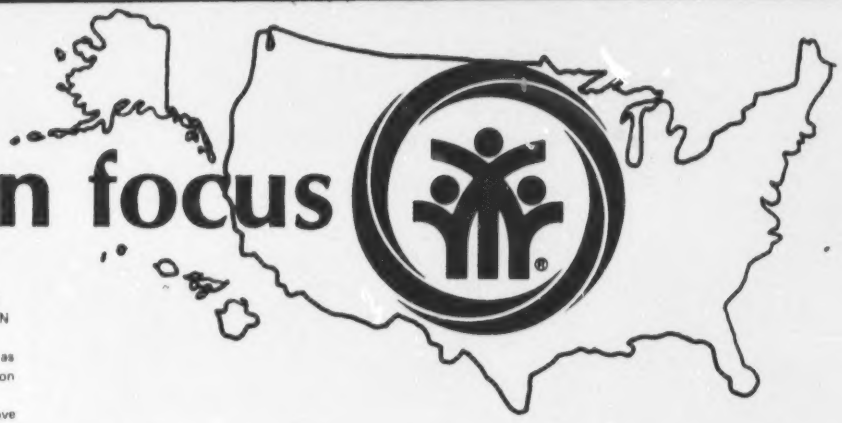

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Relationship of Child Abuse to the Workplace: Employer-Based Strategies for Prevention

Working Paper No. 4

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This is a background paper for the "Strengthening Families through the Workplace" conference sponsored by the National Committee for Prevention of Child Abuse and held at the Wingspread Conference Center, Racine, Wisconsin from July 11-13, 1982.

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TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)."

The workplace exerts a powerful influence on American families. As noted author Rosabeth Kanter suggests, sociologists have rejected "the myth of separate worlds" and have come to the conclusion that work and family have an interlocking relationship on each other.[1-3] In view of this, it is productive to explore the ways in which the workplace and the phenomenon of child abuse, one of the most serious problems facing American society today, are interrelated. For purposes of this paper child abuse will be defined as non-accidental situations in which a child suffers physical trauma, deprivation of basic physical and developmental needs or mental injury, as a result of an act or lack of action of a parent or caretaker. Major categories of abuse include physical abuse, sexual abuse, physical neglect and emotional maltreatment.

A recent study conducted by the National Center on Child Abuse and Neglect gives a conservative estimate of over 1 million cases of child abuse and neglect per year in this country.[4] Data from another national study indicates that the incidence level may even be significantly higher than this with 1.7 million children between the ages of 3 to 17 abused per year.[5] There is no doubt that the problem of child abuse is of critical importance to society and that it touches all of our lives deeply. An analysis of the relationship between child abuse and the world of work may reveal preventive strategies and potential resources, located within the workplace, for dealing with the problem.

This analysis recognizes the fact that there are no simple cause and effect relationships with social problems, but, rather, interrelated realities which weave a pattern of influence on each other. As James Garbaraino has pointed out, there is an "indirect process of effect" among social problems.[6] This is certainly true when the institution of work and its relationship to a very complex problem like child abuse is analyzed.

With this caveat in mind, the following hypotheses concerning the relationship between the workplace and child abuse needs to be examined: (a) work is a strong deterrent and, likewise, unemployment is an important precipitator of child abuse; (b) some work-related phenomena actually contribute to child abuse; (c) workplace policies and practices which influence parents in a positive way can serve as preventive measures against child abuse; (d) child abuse has a reciprocal relationship to the workplace in that it influences the future workforce of society.

This paper will examine the relationship between child abuse and the workplace and discuss employer-based strategies which can reduce the stress level of working parents and provide a preventive buffer against problems of child abuse and neglect.

PART I. CHILD ABUSE AND THE WORLD OF WORK

As American society has moved from an agricultural to an industrial and a post-industrial society, there have been significant changes in its family structure [1,7]. These changes are most apparent in the role of women and their emergent influence on the workplace. Historian J. St. John has referred to this fundamental change in the nature of the American workforce as "a social revolution of unparalleled magnitude" [8]. The revolution reflects the fact that the American workforce is currently 43% female and that within the next 8 years it will be almost one-half female [8,9]. In fact, the traditional male-breadwinner family, upon which many of our work-related rituals are based, now comprises only 14% of the labor force [10].

By 1979, 55% of all mothers with children under 18 years of age were in the labor force. Even more importantly, 45% of American mothers with preschool children were working [3, 8,11]. These statistics have tremendous implications for children in our society. By 1978, the number of children under 18 years of age with 2 working parents had risen to 50% [3]. If we add the working single parent to this figure, we find that the majority of America's children are growing up in homes where both parents, or the sole parent, are employed outside the home from the early years of the child on. This marks a tremendous change in the nature of the relationship of the family to the workplace and it has profound implications for the ever increasing number of people in our society who play the dual role of worker-parent.

(A) Differential Stress of Working Parents

Working parents, especially working mothers, bring a new set of needs to the workplace. In order to deal with the responsibilities of job and children, working parents must resolve three pressing needs: (1) the need for adequate child care arrangements; (2) the need for a flexible work schedule; and (3) educational needs concerning the role of worker-parent. The degree of stress which the parent experiences in the workplace will depend on the manner in which these needs are met. It will also depend on the nature of resources available to the parent-worker within the family, the workplace and the community.

It is helpful to identify four major types of working families and to recognize that the potential for stress is different for each one. A typology includes the traditional breadwinner family where the father works outside the home while his spouse takes care of the children; the dual-career family where both parents, usually a college educated, middle class, professional couple, work outside the home; the two paycheck family where both parents, usually a blue collar, working class couple, work outside the home, and the single parent family where the sole parent, usually a woman, works outside the home.

While this is not a complete typology, it does provide a framework for looking at stress and how it might be differentially distributed among working parents. For example, the traditional breadwinner may have a ready solution to child care but might, depending on the family structure, produce a great deal of stress for the caretaker-wife. The dual career couple may be quite capable of purchasing quality child care, but may be much more susceptible to the stress of accommodating two intense and highly demanding careers in addition to child-rearing responsibilities. The two-paycheck, working class couple, however, may have serious difficulty finding affordable, quality child care. The single parent is very likely to experience difficulty in both locating and affording adequate child care.

There is one overriding variable, i.e., economic status, which stands out in examining the relationship between stress and child abuse. There is strong evidence which points to the fact that child abuse and neglect is distributed disproportionately among the lower socioeconomic groups [12,13]. Indeed 87% of children who had been reported and substantiated as abused or neglected in the national incidence study were found to live in families with annual incomes under $15,000 [4]. This means that whatever the type of working arrangement which a family might have, their vulnerability to the problem of child abuse and neglect is greatly compounded if they are in the lower socioeconomic strata.

One obvious high stress category is that of the single-working parent. The number of one-parent families have risen sharply over the past few years and now accounts for approximately 15% of the families in the country [3]. The majority of these families are headed by women who are primarily in the lower paying clerical, service and blue collar occupations [9]. Of the total women in the current workforce less than 1% earn more than $20,000 a year [8]. This means that the majority of single parent families are headed by women in the lower socioeconomic level. In looking at the workplace and its relationship to child abuse therefore, special attention needs to be paid to the heavy stresses placed on the single working mother.

(B) Work as a Deterrent to Child Abuse

One of the strongest variables associated with child abuse is that of unemployment. Gil reports in his national epidemiological survey that 17.5% of the fathers of abused children were unemployed during the year before the child was abused while 11.8% were unemployed at the time of the abusive act. Light, in this statistical analysis of Gil's data relates that

> despite the general scarcity of discriminators, the variable that shows up most frequently as somehow related to child abuse is fathers' unemployment. This finding confirms a widely held theory that family stress, both emotional and financial, related to unemployment, ties in to incidence of abuse [15, p. 588].

Justice relates a poignant anecdote where the stress related to fathers' unemployment resulted in a serious incident of abuse.

> Dexter was a 24-year old former college student who could not find work, due in large part to poor eyesight and no marketable skills. His wife worked while he remained at home in a small garage apartment with their 3-year old son. Dexter said that he felt useless and very tense, acting as "babysitter" everyday. One day he went to the corner newstand to buy a paper to look at the latest want ads and when he returned home, the child had messed up the apartment and had broken a vase. Dexter whipped the boy with a belt and then placed him in boiling hot water in the bathtub. The boy suffered third-degree burns and was under treatment in a hospital for six weeks [16, p. 54].

Employment and the benefits which it brings in terms of income, self-esteem and time away from children is an important deterrent to the incidence of abuse. A large study conducted by Strauss supports this. The study compared mothers who were full-time housewives with mothers with similar responsibilities but who were also employed outside the home. The child abuse rate for the housewives was half again higher than the rate for women who, in addition to their responsibilities as housekeeper and mother also had a job outside the home. The author concludes that

> ...women who have jobs outside the home may have a lower rate of child abuse because the hours the child spends at a nursery with a baby sitter reduces their time at risk, because they can escape the stress and frustration of being employed full time in a role which is not of their own choosing, and because being employed for wages gives women more power in the family and control over their lives [17, p. 217].

The facts concerning child abuse point to the conclusion that unemployment is the greatest threat to the equilibrium of a parent. This is an important concept to understand in looking to the workplace as a preventive resource. While it may not be possible to control the overall unemployment rate, at least in the short run, it may be possible to offer special assistance to working parents who are at high risk when confronted by the crisis of unemployment.

(C) Neglect Can be a By-Product of the Workplace

One form of child neglect has a direct relationship to the world of work. This is the phenomenon of latchkey children. A latchkey child is a child, usually of working parents, who is left in self-care or in the care of older

siblings for part of the day, while the parent or parents are absent from the home.

Only a handful of research efforts have looked at the problem of latchkey children [18-21]. A 1965 study analyzing the child care arrangements of pre-schoolers of working mothers found that 5% of these children were found to be left either in self-care or in the care of siblings [2]. Emlen and Perry, in summarizing the results of three national surveys of child care arrangements conducted from 1959 through 1971, indicated that from 5% to 16% of children, under the age of 6, were receiving no special care while the mother was at work. Likewise, 8% to 24% of 6 to 14 year olds were receiving no special care [19]. More recent analysis of latchkey children are even more alarming [20,21]. One 1977 government study indicates that approximately 2 million school children return to empty houses. It also estimates that 20,000 children between 1 and 6 years of age are left alone while the parents work [21,22]. Long estimates that the total number of children in self-care may be far more than 2 million and that the number of young children, between ages 1 and 6 years, in self-care may be as high as 50,000. [20].

Some may argue that it is a common, everyday experience for children to take care of themselves for periods of time and that many of these children do an adequate job of taking care of themselves and their younger siblings while their parents were absent from the home. Unfortunately, there is little data available concerning the adequacy of these arrangements and their effects on children. Certainly, the instances of pre-school children being left alone must be seen as potentially neglectful situations. We must also question the effects on school-aged children as a result of being left alone or in the care of an older sibling on a regular basis.

In a small study of children in grades one through six, in both an inner city neighborhood and in a suburban neighborhood, Long found that many children felt both fearful and isolated in self-care arrangements. The study raises serious questions about the appropriateness of early school age children taking care of themselves or being taken care of by a sibling a few years older [20]. As Long states

> ...in the face of rapid social change, social response to care of the school-aged child has lagged far behind. The number one problem of working mothers is their access to adequate child care. While public support of child care has steadily increased, the bulk of public monies in this area is spent for care for pre-school aged children. Somehow our society has managed to overlook the continuing need for supervised child care throughout at least the child's elementary school years and for the entire period that the caregiving parent is working outside the home [20, p. 1].

(D) Job Stress and Family Violence

There are situations in which job stress leads directly to instances of family violence. Kanter states that job related tension has been assumed to affect the hostility level in the family, particularly between parents and children. She summarizes the research by McKinley which suggests that control over the work environment, or lack of control, is an important factor leading to the displacement of aggression within the family[1, p. 48]. Gil refers to a similar phenomenon in relating child abuse to alienating circumtances in the workplace [23]. Justice found in his research that traumatic experiences on the job can result in undischarged tension and displaced aggression against child and family.

> Jimmy was a construction worker who didn't feel trained for standing on a scaffold 200 feet above ground as he helped finish work on a new refinery. One day the scaffold slipped and plunged some 50 feet before it stabilized. Jimmy, though unhurt, was terrified. When he got home that evening, he was still unstrung. He wanted sympathy and attention from his wife. When he found her preoccupied with holding and feeding their 8 week old son, he wrested the baby from her arms and the child banged against a door-facing. The baby was admitted to a hospital for treatment of a skull fracture. [16, p. 55].

Kadushin and Martin provide another moving example of displaced aggression concerning a young, abusive father employed in a fast food restaurant.

> I went to work like at six o' clock and got off at two in the morning. That was a hell of a hectic day, to put it bluntly. It was a hard day at work. It was too busy all day long. I just came home and I was grouchy. I was tired, I wanted to go to bed, you know, and the baby wouldn't keep quiet, you know, so anybody could sleep. Like she was you know, just a problem that I could live without for awhile. It seemed like that, she was becoming a problem. The way she kept crying all the time. All the time she wanted, you know, wanted to cry. And it drove me nuts. Working such a long time at work, you know, a really busy day, coming home at two in the morning and, you know, getting stuck halfway on the way. That night, it dropped about six inches of snow, all night long and I think the snow was this deep, and I didn't have snow tires or nothing, I got stuck about five different times...When I got home, it was late at night and she was fussing. I meant she was <u>really</u> fussing. I held her, wife held her, I held her, wife held her....You know, I got really pissed off and I started hollering and screaming

> and yelling at her and telling her--shut her you-know-what mouth, you know, and she just kept crying, you know--BAM! [24, p. 221-222].

Efforts directed at allowing working parents more control over their work environment are likely to reduce the possibility of displaced job-related aggression and resultant instances of family violence.

(E) Heavy Work Demands and Absent Fathers

In some instances the heavy job demands of work and job-related travel result in a worker-father who is absent from the home. As Kanter suggests, occupations and jobs differ in the degree to which they absorb and consume workers' lives [1]. Some fathers, very often professionals and executives, find it extremely difficult to fulfill the dual responsibilities of work and family. Biller suggests that this can result in a form of "paternal deprivation" as serious as if the father were physically absent from the home. While this problem also affects some working mothers, up to now it has been primarily limited to fathers. This is, of course, changing as more women move into upper level, highly demanding positions.

> Many fathers because of long-term goals, 'sacrifice' time with their families only to find that they have lost their children, at least psychologically, in the process. They may end up with much financial security but a very empty family [125, p. 163].

The phenomenon of father-absence has implications for the emotional and cognitive development of children. For example, the presence of the father and the amount of time which he is able to spend with his son has been positively related to the likelihood of academic achievement. [2].

Justice found that instances where the husband's workload caused him to neglect his family were directly related to child abuse.

> As working late, business trips and work brought home from the office, intrude more and more between husband and wife, an isolated wife with a desperate need to be comforted and cared for may turn to her child for satisfaction. Finding her need frustrated by the child's inability to provide care and comfort to the mother, she may strike out in anger at the offspring [16, p. 54].

Although some careers will always place heavy demands on a parent's time and energy, some attempt needs to be made in the workplace to provide support for parents who must struggle with the responsibilities of a highly intense and demanding career as well as that of a family.

(F) Childbirth and the Working Parent

There has been considerable research concerning the importance of the perinatal period in facilitating the bonding and attachment between parent and infant necessary for a healthy relationship [26-28]. The perinatal period extends from the sixth month of pregnancy through the first month after the birth of the infant. It is an extremely important time for mother, father, and baby in developing a close and intimate relationship with each other. It can also be a time of stress and frustration as parents learn to accommodate the newborn into their daily routines and family life [29].

Gray states that the accumulation of findings in the area of bonding and attachment suggest a strong connection between good attachment behaviors and the lessening of child abuse [30]. This is an important consideration for working parents of newborns who must accommodate the bonding and attachment experience within the demands of the workplace. The need for special consideration at the time of childbirth is not limited to the working mother, however, but includes the working father. Portner summarizes one study of working fathers of newborns which found that the normal work demands hindered adjustment to their new roles as fathers.

> Support for their fatherhood from the work environment was generally only a congratulatory 'pat on the back' from co-workers. There was seldom an institutional response in the form of flexible work schedules or paternity leaves which would allow the fathers to become more involved with the new child. [2, p. 26].

PART II PREVENTIVE STRATEGIES IN THE WORKPLACE

In view of the relationship between child abuse and work, it is necessary to explore workplace activities that can help reduce the stress level of working parents and provide a preventive buffer against problems of child abuse and neglect. These activities include employer-supported child care, flexible worktime options, employee assistance programs, educational programs for working parents, and supportive networks for parents in the workplace.

(A) Employer-Supported Child Care

The need for child care services has increased dramatically over the past few decades. Most of this need is the result of the great number of women and mothers entering the workforce. While in 1940 only 8.6% of mothers with minor children were employed, by 1980 57% of women with minor children were in the workplace. This tremendous increase in the numbers of working mothers has produced a need for child care which greatly outweighs available resources. There are 7.5 million children under six years of age whose mothers are working while only 900,000 children are served in day care centers across the country [31]. This means that a great number of working parents must make other arrangements for the care of their pre-school children while they are at work. In addition to day care for infants, toddlers and pre-schoolers, working parents must also find adequate before and after school programs as well as summer programs for the school-aged child (ages 6-13).

The precedent for corporate involvement in suppport of child care is fairly recent. Prior to 1940 only two companies operated child care centers for their employees. World War II created a demand for a large female workforce which resulted in the passage of the Community Facilities Act also known as the Lanham Act. While this Act largely involved the use of public monies for child care for working mothers, two programs were maintained by the Kaiser Shipbuilding Corporation in Portland, Oregon from 1943 through 1945 [32,33]. At the height of their activity, the two corporate centers cared for almost 1,000 of their workers' children. After the war the centers were closed and corporate child care efforts lessened. During the 1950's and 1960's there were very few corporate child care programs and of the 18 on-site child care programs which opened under corporate sponsorship from 1960 to 1974 most were closed in a few years [34].

It is only in the late 1970's and early 1980's that there has been a renewed interest concerning workplace support for child care. In preliminary findings, the National Employers Supported Child Care Project has identified 509 firms or government agencies that offer child care or provide some form of child care benefit. This includes 287 child care centers (200 in hospitals, 59 in industry, 20 in government agencies and 8 union sponsored centers) and 222 corporation and agencies which provide other forms of support for child care [35].

The range of employer-based support for child care includes on-site programs (e.g., Official Airline Guides, Zale Corporation, Corning Glass), information and referral programs (e.g., Honeywell and Steelcase, Inc.), voucher programs which provide financial assistance to the employee (e.g., Polaroid), summer day camp programs (e.g., Felt Products) corporate contributions to nonprofit child care centers in the community (e.g., John Hancock Mutual Life Insurance Co.) and consortia of employers who support non-profit day care (e.g., Control Data). While these initial efforts may be encouraging, the available benefits still fall far short of the growing need for child care by working parents.

Special concerns must be addressed as the corporate sector is looked to more and more for child care support. The first concern is that child care efforts developed in the workplace need to be built on, and not in competition with, the already scarce day care programs which exist in local communities. Second, employer-based child care centers must be able to produce child care services which are affordable on the one hand, but which also provide the same kind of high quality, professional child care which has been developed over the years in the not-for-profit sector.

(B) Flexible Worktime Options

As Rosabeth Kantor has suggested, "the amount of time demanded by occupations and the timing of occupational events are among the most obvious and important ways occupational life affects family life" [1, p. 31]. The traditional and prevalent five day, forty hour work week evolved around a workforce whose composition has changed dramatically over the past few years. The current workforce has an ever increasing need for less rigid work hours and job arrangements.

> The present practice of standardizing work time emerged during a period when our country's economy was oriented towards the manufacture of goods and the basic social unit was the male-supported nuclear family. Continuing to insist on uniform work time today when we are increasingly a service-oriented economy with a multitude of acceptable social living arrangements represents a resistance to incorporating into workplace policy and practice some of the basic changes that have taken place in our society during the last decade [10, p. 1].

There are a number of workplace practices which have emerged in the past few years which have been especially helpful in accommodating the needs of working parents including flextime arrangements, permanent part-time and jobsharing.

Flextime is a concept which originated in Germany during the mid 1950's and which has been implemented on a large scale throughout Europe, Japan and Canada. It was introduced into the United States only fifteen years ago and has spread gradually since then. In 1977 it was estimated that 12.8% of all non-government organizations with 50 or more employees were using flextime, covering approximately 5.8% of all employers or 2.5 to 3.5 millions workers [36].

The interest of workers in flextime was validated at the 1980 White House Conference on Families at which over 90% of the delegates supported flextime options as well as other family oriented practices. In addition, the response of corporations who have utilized flextime programs has been very favorable.

> A 1979 survey of companies with flextime programs determined that with no appreciable cost to management, allowing workers to adapt their work schedules to better accommodate personal and family needs resulted in increased morale, a greater sense of responsibility, lessened stress and reduced employee turnover. It is virtually impossible to find reports of any decreased productivity resulting from the adoption of flextime , and the experiences of companies who have used flextime indicate that the advantages generally outweigh the disadvantages [36].

Permanent part-time is another helpful work option for parents. In 1980 29% of employed women were working part-time [37]. A recent Harris Survey indicates that a much larger percentage of women (41%) would prefer part-time work if it were available [38]. For many women permanent part-time work is an appropriate means of accommodating parenting responsibilities while continuing to participate in the workforce.

In the past an entire segment of female workers entered and left and re-entered the workplace around the needs and seasonal schedules of their children. Unfortunately, most of these women were deprived of many of the benefits of their full time counterparts such as seniority and job security, insurance benefits and sick leave. Permanent part-time positions allow working parents the opportunity to choose a less demanding job alternative while receiving benefits offered to full time workers. Connecticut General, Equitable Life Assurance and Xerox are examples of corporations which utilize permanent part-time employees.

Finally, jobsharing is an additional option for parents who wish to have more time available to spend with their children while continuing to pursue a career. Job sharing involves two persons sharing the responsibilities of one full

time job with salary and fringe benefits prorated between the two [39]. This is a particularly important option for those workers who need extra time with their families but who still want to stay active in a job which may not lend itself to traditional part-time work. While job sharing may not be very prevalent on a national level, there is evidence of strong corporate interest in this work alternative. In the Louis Harris survey conducted for General Mills, 70% of human resource officers in the survey stated they they expected their company to adopt a policy of job sharing in the future.

(C) Employee Assistance Programs for Working Parents

Employee assistance programs were developed forty years ago as a response to the impact of alcoholism on work performance. As EAPs' developed they broadened their scope to include assistance to employees around a variety of job-related issues. Such comprehensive or "broad brush" programs cover a range of employee concerns including marital problems, child management, consumer and financial issues, stress reduction and healthy lifestyles as well as alcoholism. Employee assistance programs may be serviced by an industry, a union or an outside agency and provide a number of functions including case findings, assessment, referral and follow-up as well as prevention [40].

Employee assistance programs can make a unique contribution to working parents. In addition to problem-oriented counseling they may also provide support and assistance to employees on common concerns of working parents such as locating and managing day care, time management, support to parents at the time of child birth and assistance with problems of family relocation. One area where employee assistance programs may be critical for working parents is at the time of job layoff and termination. While industry has made an effort to assist higher level employees through outplacement programs, there is a need to assist all workers with the tremendous adjustment which a family must make during a crisis of unemployment.

(D) Educational Programs and Support Networks for Parents in the Workplace

It is not an easy task to fulfill the responsibilities of both worker and parent. The working parent must acquire information and develop new skills in order to successfully accommodate these two roles. Educational programs at the worksite and formal or informal support networks are helpful to the employee in accomplishing this feat. Both of these approaches have the advantage of being wellness-oriented, rather than problem-focused, and both offer a sense of support to the working parent through an identification with others in the same situation.

One series of educational seminars was developed for working mothers through the Dayton Hudson Foundation. The series, entitled "Balancing Both Worlds--A Challenge for the

Working Mother" was offered through the United Way to a number of employers. The sessions were offered at noontime and covered such subjects as ways in which a working mother may balance her needs at home and work; ways to become closer to one's child and ways to enhance personal growth. The programs were well received and the evaluations indicated that participants gained skills and insights which helped reduce tension around family and work concepts [41].

Other educational programs such as the "I'm In Charge" education course were developed to deal with specific problems of the working parent. "I'm In Charge" is a self-care education course for upper elementary aged children and their parents. It deals with the problem of latchkey children and teaches survival skills to parents and their children who care for themselves while parents are at work [42].

Prudential Insurance in Houston, Texas developed a weekend "open house" in which employees brought their children to the worksite. The children learned about their parents' workplace and created their own art work which was displayed in the lobby of the corporation. Control Data has developed a parent education curriculum as well as a consumer education curriculum which is available to employees through its Plato computer system.

Another important resource for working parents is the utilization of formal and informal support networks. The Honeywell Corporation in Minneapolis organized a Working Parents Task Force to develop solutions to the problems of working parents. Its major focus was to explore options and develop recommendations which help working parents reduce conflicts between their work and family responsibilities [43]. Another group, the Working Parents Coalition, was organized in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania by a number of organizations including ALCOA in order to deal with the special needs of working parents on a community wide level. Unemployed women in Chicago, Illinois have organized a group entitled Unemployed Women in Advertising and Communications (UWAC). This network of unemployed women deals with the emotional issues involved with unemployment as well as discusses job seeking strategies for its members [44]. Union networks are another important source of support for working parents. They can be particularly helpful to parents at the time of layoff and unemployment. These support networks can be extremely important to working parents in helping them to deal with the emotional aspects of unemployment, such as loss of self-esteem and depression as well as in providing concrete assistance on issues like emergency child care and financial assistance.

POSTSCRIPT: ECOLOGY OF THE WORKPLACE

Any discussion about workplace policies and practices which support working parents would be remiss if it didn't address the question of feasibility. During these extremely difficult economic times is it appropriate to consider innovative approaches in favor of working parents or are these unrealistic notions which have very little practical chance of being implemented on a large scale? The answer to this question involves the question of specific incentives for corporations as well as a consideration of future trends in the workforce.

There is ample evidence to suggest that corporations benefit from the utilization of flexible worktime options, employee assistance programs and parent education programs in the form of reduced recruitment costs, lessened job turnover and absenteeism, and increased employee morale [1,10,36,41]. The evidence is even stronger concerning the impact of corporate supported day care on the worker. In a national survey Perry found the following benefits from employer-sponsored child care: reduction of job turnover, reduction of absenteeism, improvement of personnel recruitment potential, improvement of employee morale, assistance with affirmative action, improvement of employer community relations and opportunity for good publicity [45].

At the Northside Childrens' Center, a cooperative center in Minneapolis sponsored by several different businesses, including Control Data Corporation, there was a 21% reduction in absenteeism and job turnover for employees who had children at the child care center was one-third that of other employees [46,47]. In addition to these benefits, there are substantial tax incentives for employers to provide child care services for employees under the Economic Recovery Tax Act of 1981 [48]. There has been little research which examines directly the impact of supportive policies and practices for employee parents on worker productivity. However, there is a great deal of anecdotal information and employer self evaluations which indicate that there is a positive relationship between them and productivity.

Perhaps the strongest argument for the implementation of supportive policies and practices for working parents is based on the compelling demographic changes which are taking place in our society and in our future workforce. The population pyramid in our country is being inverted, moving from a "baby boom" generation (now aged 20 to 35) to a "baby bust" generation (now aged 0 to 20). The post war baby boom of the forties and fifties changed drastically as the birth rate in our country declined from the mid-sixties through the seventies and early eighties. As Alan Pifer poignantly relates,

> Every child alive today, or born in the years just ahead, whether male or female, black, white, hispanic or otherwise, will be a scarce resource and a precious asset as an adult in the early part of the next century. At that time, the nation's standard of living, its capacity to defend itself--perhaps its very viability as a nation will be almost wholly

> dependent upon a small contingent of men and women who are today's children [49, p. 34.].

There exists an ecology to the workplace in which a depletion of the strength and resources of our families will result in a depleted future workforce and in which investments in today's working parents and their children will pay off in a richer, more healthy and productive future workforce. The children of today will have a substantial task ahead of them as productive members of the economic system.

> It is possible to say that this will be one of the most hard pressed, heavily burdened generations in the nation's history, especially as we enter the early decades of the next century, when the unproductive part of the population, composed of the dependent young and hordes of the elderly, will be extraordinarily large in proportion to the productive part. The problem in a nutshell will be that too few will be supporting too many. [50, p. 19].

In view of this reality it is obvious that workplace supports for employed parents are both feasible and necessary. Such policies and programs take into account the fact that both our family structure and our workforce composition are undergoing fundamental changes. The central fact of this revolution is that the children of today are tomorrow's ever shrinking workforce.

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